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Strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention in the aftermath of the South Asian earthquake disaster — Pakistan

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/13 of 14 November 2005. It addresses the coordination of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and prevention efforts undertaken in the aftermath of the South Asian earthquake disaster in Pakistan. The report provides an overview of the relief and recovery effort to date, and identifies key lessons that should be both immediately applied to ongoing recovery activities and considered in the response to future disasters. The report includes a set of recommendations from the Secretary-General aimed at improving disaster preparedness, response and recovery at all levels, and at the importance of reducing the overall vulnerability of populations in disaster-prone countries and regions.

* A/61/50 and Corr.1.
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I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/13 of 14 November 2005, in which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session on the implementation of the above-mentioned resolution under the item entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", through the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2006.

II. Defining the crisis

2. On 8 October 2005, a massive earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale struck South Asia at 8.50 a.m. local time. This was the most devastating earthquake in a century in the region and it caused extensive destruction across 30,000 square kilometres of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan and Pakistan Administered Kashmir, including the latter's capital, Muzaffarabad, which was located near the epicentre of the earthquake. The official death toll stands at more than 73,000 people, including 1,300 in India and 4 in Afghanistan. At least 17,000 children were killed when schools collapsed, a staggering 69,400 people were severely injured and some 3.3 million people were left homeless.

3. The earthquake destroyed or severely damaged more than 400,000 homes, more than 500 health facilities, nearly 6,000 schools and colleges, as well as many Government buildings; hundreds of doctors, nurses, teachers, Government officials and community leaders lost their lives. Civilian authorities, especially at the provincial level, were severely affected with extensive damage to economic assets and infrastructure. Social service delivery, commerce and communications were also damaged or destroyed.

4. The fact that the earthquake affected many thousands of people living in high mountainous areas in thousands of scattered hamlets and villages posed exceptional logistical challenges. The immediate response challenge was to evacuate those earthquake survivors in need of immediate medical assistance and to provide them with adequate food, water, shelter and medical care before the onset of winter. The few roads that existed before the earthquake were either immediately destroyed or subsequently covered by landslides triggered by multiple aftershocks, however. Declining weather conditions further limited the ability of search and rescue teams to reach remote communities by land. As a result, aid workers had to rely on air support for the delivery of essential relief supplies. In many cases, earthquake survivors were forced to undertake their own search and rescue operations and to find their own coping mechanisms. Some chose to move away from damaged areas and formed makeshift displacement camps. Others were unwilling to leave their homes for fear of losing land and property. The result: a large and complex relief effort operating in extremely fluid conditions.

5. To initiate relief operations, on 11 October the Emergency Relief Coordinator launched a United Nations flash appeal, for US$ 270 million (later revised to $550 million), to cover the first six months of the relief operation. The flash appeal was followed by a November pledging conference hosted by the Government of Pakistan calling for $5.2 billion for reconstruction. Following the adoption of resolution

60/13 by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General appointed former United States President George H. W. Bush as his Special Envoy for the South Asia earthquake to help to mobilize and sustain international support for the relief efforts.

A. The initial response

6. The speed and scale of the earthquake response of the Government of Pakistan was exceptional. The Pakistan military, and specifically the Army, led initial relief operations in the disaster area, deploying several thousand troops, 60 helicopters and hundreds of transport vehicles into NWFP and Pakistan Administered Kashmir to deliver food, water, blankets and medical supplies. Though no disaster management agency existed within the Government prior to the disaster, on 10 October the Government created the Federal Relief Commission to coordinate the relief efforts with relevant ministries, provincial governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); launched a President's Relief Fund to mobilize resources for the relief efforts; and established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) to facilitate the rebuilding and repair of damaged infrastructure. In early November, the Government also initiated cash compensation programmes for affected families, which began disbursing funds immediately.

7. The response by Pakistan civil society was also immediate and strong. Thousands of civilian volunteers and hundreds of local NGOs, including volunteers and staff from the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, provided emergency shelter assistance, medical assistance and purified water to hundreds of thousands of earthquake survivors. Communities established small self-help groups throughout the country, raising as much as $100 million to support earthquake victims.

8. Following the immediate request for international assistance by the Government of Pakistan, more than 100 international organizations, including the United Nations, the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), international urban search and rescue teams, NGOs, the international donor community, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and foreign militaries, arrived in Pakistan to lend material and human support to the Government's humanitarian response. A United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team arrived in-country within 24 hours after the earthquake, establishing on-site coordination centres in Islamabad and in areas most severely affected by the earthquake. Field Assessment and Coordination Teams from IFRC worked in close coordination with the UNDAC teams to coordinate Red Cross/Red Crescent activities. Given the large-scale involvement of international militaries in the relief effort, the United Nations deployed civil-military coordination officers to Islamabad and other humanitarian hubs to establish links with the Government.

9. As the urgency and complexity of response needs became apparent, the humanitarian coordinator, together with the United Nations country team and UNDAC decided to implement the "cluster leadership approach", a coordination framework initiated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator as part of ongoing reforms to the humanitarian system, to improve service delivery and accountability in humanitarian response. In the case of Pakistan, clusters were formed for those assistance areas that required a strengthened response. They included emergency

shelter, management of camps for internally displaced persons, water and sanitation and others. Each cluster was comprised of humanitarian organizations working on the ground in those areas and was coordinated by a designated "cluster lead". The overall purpose of the clusters was to assess needs, set priorities and mobilize appropriate staff and materials for an effective response. The Government of Pakistan welcomed the cluster approach and participated to varying degrees depending on their engagement in the area of activity.

10. Six months after the earthquake, the humanitarian situation in the affected regions has, for the most part, stabilized. More than 500,000 tents and other shelter materials have been distributed to people living both above and below the snowline. Some 1 million people have received food aid. Forty field hospitals and 10 mobile health units are in operation. More than 150,000 people living in 153 camps for internally displaced persons have access to medical and psychosocial care, food and clean water and sanitation facilities. The relief operation has prevented mass population movements and averted the congestion of already overcrowded urban areas. All major roads have been cleared of debris. Furthermore, there were no major outbreaks of disease and no increase in morbidity and mortality when compared to pre-earthquake levels.

B. Early recovery

11. Although humanitarian needs will endure well into the recovery phase, the United Nations and its humanitarian and development partners, together with the Government of Pakistan, have begun to reorient their efforts from lifesaving operations towards early recovery and reconstruction activities focusing on the restoration of social services and of the livelihoods and productive capacities of the affected populations.

12. The United Nations and the Government of Pakistan conducted an assessment of recovery needs in affected areas during the relief phase, which was complemented by a damage and loss assessment, spearheaded by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and a number of NGOs. Based on these assessments, the United Nations developed an early recovery framework, focusing on support to ongoing humanitarian assistance operations, to the spontaneous recovery and rebuilding efforts of the affected population, to restoring the capacities of the civil administration, and to reducing future disaster risks.

13. One of the priorities has been the revitalization of the health-care delivery system. Temporary tented hospitals are being replaced with more permanent health facilities and environmental health initiatives are under way to manage medical waste. The United Nations has mobilized nine mental health teams to provide regular psychosocial support to affected populations. The Government of Pakistan has developed a national policy on how to address disabilities resulting from the earthquake, and a range of partners are involved in working with the Government to set up rehabilitation institutions and programmes.

14. The Government and its international partners have also restored many of the affected water supply systems to acceptable levels, built thousands of transitional shelters and have trained local engineers, contractors and community masons in earthquake-resistant building techniques for the construction of more permanent housing. The Government has also disbursed the first instalment of the

reconstruction compensation scheme to more than 500,000 families, has restored financial services to the affected regions, and together with its international development partners, has begun rapid income generation through cash-for-work programmes, emergency employment services, and skills training, resulting in the employment of almost 36,000 people, including 12,000 women.

15. Protection concerns that arose during the post-disaster period are being addressed by the Government and the United Nations, including those linked to the Government housing compensation policy for widows, orphans, people without clear legal proof of land tenure, and people rendered landless owing to the earthquake. The Government also initiated one of the most important child protection measures, when it banned the adoption of children in earthquake-affected areas to avoid the trafficking and abduction of separated and disabled children. As a complement, the United Nations has initiated a gender study to ensure that key gender concerns are properly integrated into the continuing recovery effort. The main aspects covered are property rights, opportunities for jobs, access to credit and training, access to education for girls and increasing the number of female health staff.

16. To date, such recovery activities have largely been confined to urban areas and displacement camps. As the recovery effort moves forward, it will become important to extend such activities to rural and remote areas. The speed at which recovery can take place in rural areas should be viewed, however, in the context of ongoing human development challenges. Prior to the earthquake, these remote communities lacked access to even rudimentary health care, safe water and sanitation facilities and schools. For many, health facilities were kilometres away reachable by narrow, unnavigable tracks. The lack of schools has contributed to a literacy rate of under 20 per cent (and just above 2 per cent for women), in some cases. The focus of the recovery effort will largely be establishing, rather than restoring, social services, in many of these areas. Issues, such as land tenure and gender that pre-date the earthquake, may need to be remedied through longer-term initiatives. Those initiatives will require increased support to the Government of Pakistan and the international community and will take some time.

III. Lessons identified and future challenges

17. The South Asia earthquake offers an opportunity to reflect on the efficacy and impact of relief operations and to highlight issues that will become increasingly important as the recovery effort moves forward. The following section examines the broad issues and challenges that have surfaced as part of the response to the South Asia earthquake to date.

The role of Government

18. **A strong, central Government institution focused on disaster management is critical to effective disaster response.** While the Pakistan military was successful at delivering humanitarian assistance under difficult circumstances, the absence of a civilian government disaster management system in Pakistan posed a major challenge for the humanitarian response and recovery operations. At the outset of the crisis, there was little knowledge or understanding of the ability of Pakistan to respond at national, local or community levels. As a result, institutional

mechanisms were established in an ad hoc manner that added to the overall pressures in an already complex and demanding humanitarian situation. Once the Federal Relief Commission was established, however, it enabled the pooling of resources from line ministries, provincial governments, the Pakistan military, the United Nations, NGOs and civil society for the relief effort. The establishment of a civilian institutional system specifically dedicated to disaster preparedness, response and risk reduction would do much to strengthen the ability of Pakistan to mitigate future disasters.

19. **As the recovery process moves forward, it will also be important to decentralize decision-making by empowering the local authorities in the earthquake-affected regions.** Early on, the Government of Pakistan was engaged in recovery planning. During the relief phase, the Government created ERRA to serve as the main interface with bilateral donors, international lending institutions, other international organizations, national authorities and philanthropic organizations working towards the recovery of the stricken areas.

20. Recognizing the fact that most reconstruction activities would be carried out by provincial and local authorities, affected populations, civil society organizations and the private sector, the Government formed regional relief and rehabilitation authorities and designated ERRA counterparts charged with overseeing the recovery activities carried out by provincial and local authorities in each affected region. As the recovery effort moves forward, the central Government should further devolve decision-making and authority to those local structures.

Civil-military coordination

21. **Though coordination among humanitarian and military actors (both national and foreign) during the relief phase was effective, military actors involved in disaster response should operate with a clear understanding of and respect for humanitarian principles.** The response to the South Asia earthquake was exceptional in that the Pakistan National Army delivered most of the humanitarian relief, interactions between national and foreign military and the international humanitarian community were positive and relief efforts were largely coordinated. Many military actors, however, were unfamiliar with the basic tenets of international humanitarian law and the role and operations of civilian humanitarian actors. The 1994 Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (the Oslo Guidelines)[1] should be reviewed with military personnel working in humanitarian operations during each new large-scale crisis where there is a significant military presence directly involved in assistance delivery in order to apply them to the local circumstances of the crisis.

22. **As the recovery phase gains pace, it will become important to consider the handover of recovery and reconstruction activities to civilian authorities.** Though an early transfer of the management of organized camps from military to civilian administration was planned, poor weather, coupled with the much-weakened capacity of the local administration, delayed the handover in most cases. The Government has therefore decided to maintain its military presence in many affected areas until there is sufficient capacity in place for the military to withdraw. In that regard, local officials and institutions must be empowered by both central authorities and the international community to take over from military actors. Given that much of the provincial administration was seriously affected by the earthquake,

it is important that such empowerment is coupled with vigorous capacity-building to allow for the leadership of such authorities during the rebuilding phase.

Engagement of civil society

23. **The role of national NGOs, volunteers and civil society groups in both relief and recovery operations must be better acknowledged and their participation in ongoing recovery efforts must be improved.** National NGOs and civil society groups, including both organized and spontaneous volunteers, provided crucial support to the relief operation. Community-based organizations were the first to reach affected populations, and the support networks created by national volunteers who spoke the language and who understood the cultural make-up of Pakistani society were critical to sustaining support to earthquake victims, particularly in remote areas.

24. The recovery process now requires the increased engagement of the civil administration and of national NGOs with strong links to the affected communities. The participation of such groups would help to strengthen the economic capacity, promote community involvement at local levels and would also ensure that people living in vulnerable areas are adequately covered by disaster preparedness mechanisms at the local level.

25. Some measures for such engagement are already under way. The Government, with support from the United Nations, has launched a National Volunteer Movement that is mobilizing volunteers for post-earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction tasks. To date, some 4,000 national volunteers have been registered. District-level dialogues, including local government, communities, NGOs, and the military in Mansehra, Batagram, Muzaffarabad and Bagh, have begun to identify post-earthquake challenges in early recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation. In addition, ERRA has launched a set of guidelines and a partnership strategy for NGO implementing partners that would like to participate in rural reconstruction activities. The United Nations has also broadened its decision-making processes at the country level to involve the international NGO community and the IFRC at the highest level. Activities that involve civil society in disaster preparedness, response, reconstruction and risk reduction should be encouraged and adequately supported.

Response capacity

26. **Prearranged partnerships among the United Nations, NGOs and Governments proved to be critical in ensuring a rapid and efficient international emergency response in the initial phase of the emergency.** Standby partnerships developed with the International Humanitarian Partnership,[2] for example, facilitated the immediate deployment of accommodation, office facilities and communications, which were invaluable in establishing working and living facilities used by the entire humanitarian community. Similarly, pre-existing partnerships between the UNDAC system, UNOSAT[3] and NGOs allowed for the rapid dissemination of satellite imagery and other geographical information system services that assisted in locating earthquake survivors in remote areas. Strengthening international, regional and national preparedness mechanisms should be included in any plan for building local, national and regional capacities for response in emergencies.

27. **Drawing on local skills, expertise and materials that exist in disaster-affected countries may result in a more effective response.** As the focus of the immediate relief effort was to provide emergency shelter to earthquake survivors, there was an early focus on procuring tents. It soon became clear, however, that tents could not be the solution. Winterized tents were not available — either domestically or globally — to cover the enormous need, and the adaptation of normal tents for winter conditions required too much time. Other shelter materials, however, such as corrugated iron sheets, were more appropriate to local conditions and were readily available in the local markets, as were local builders who were accustomed to using those materials for construction. While the South Asia earthquake highlights the need to enhance global stockpiles for emergency shelter items, it also demonstrates that employing local capacity, services and expertise, and resourcing them financially, is often a more timely, efficient and appropriate solution to humanitarian relief needs.

28. **Deploying qualified staff with the right skills at the right time remains a challenge.** The nature of the relief effort in Pakistan required a cadre of staff with specialist expertise and leadership experience as well as a knowledge of local languages and cultures. Many agencies found recruiting staff with the appropriate range and mix of skills at short notice difficult. The recruitment of vital national staff, especially women, was especially challenging. Though Pakistan has a large quota of young and educated professionals, identification of appropriate individuals was hampered by cultural constraints and the lack of time and capacity to effectively advertise and recruit positions. Identifying and training suitable national staff through the Red Crescent Movement, the United Nations Volunteers system in-country and the technical colleges and universities should be a key component of preparedness plans in disaster-prone countries.

Coordination

29. **Although the introduction of the cluster leadership approach in Pakistan faced teething problems, it provided a single and recognizable framework for coordination, collaboration and decision-making in a difficult operating environment.** The introduction of the cluster leadership approach in Pakistan represented an important first step towards improving humanitarian response capacity, accountability and coordination. In general, those clusters with a technical remit, for example camp management, logistics or health, performed well, as they were able to draw from well-developed expertise, experience and best practices for the effective delivery of assistance. On the whole, however, clusters were less successful at addressing cross-cutting issues, such as gender and environment, and at integrating them into the overall response. For example, the fact that female doctors and female health workers were in short supply meant that the health problems of women remained hidden and went unattended. Such issues must be addressed in future emergencies, including through the development of surge capacity in the cluster system.

30. **Successful coordination of humanitarian response activities, including through the cluster leadership approach depends on the proactive participation of all actors involved in the relief effort.** The humanitarian clusters employed in Pakistan were primarily made up of United Nations agencies and international organizations such as IOM and IFRC. To the extent that Government officials participated in the clusters, they helped to streamline operations and facilitate joint

relief strategies. For example, in the health cluster, close collaboration between the United Nations health agencies, the medical services of the Pakistan Armed Forces and the Pakistan Ministry of Health enabled the establishment of emergency field hospitals in such a way as to facilitate the eventual handover of these resources to the national health system. On the other hand, those clusters lacking Government participation struggled until a suitable Government counterpart was identified. Overall, however, the cluster approach did not sufficiently take into account the structures and capacities that existed prior to the disaster. More should be done to ensure that clusters take into account existing structures at national and local levels.

31. In addition, the fact that many non-United Nations humanitarian actors saw little value in the humanitarian clusters, their participation was inconsistent, ad hoc and in some cases created parallel assistance programmes. Increased efforts must be implemented to broaden participation in humanitarian clusters to NGOs, through existing NGO coordination bodies, international financial institutions and others.

32. **Continuing recovery efforts require close coordination with national and subnational structures as well as the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations and the international financial institutions.** The coordination of post-disaster recovery is not guided by the same broadly accepted coordination mechanisms and tools employed in the relief phase. The current situation in Pakistan confirms the lessons identified in other post-disaster recovery situations: that more structured and systematic recovery coordination arrangements are required to serve as a platform for permanent dialogue and consensus-building between Government authorities, civil society, international organizations, NGOs, donor agencies, and lending institutions. The issues requiring close coordination during the recovery process include policy setting and prioritization; standard setting for assessment, planning and implementation; resource mobilization; and monitoring and evaluation, to name just a few. The broad range of actors coupled with the array of issues make coordination of the recovery process a rather complex task. Adding to this complexity is the need for including local resources and initiatives and strengthening national ownership to prepare the ground for long-term sustainable recovery. While national Governments assume the primordial role in recovery coordination, the United Nations system role is to support and build government capacity to coordinate, rather than substitute for that capacity.

33. In Pakistan, a "recovery cluster" was formed already during the response phase. That cluster was instrumental in working with the Government of Pakistan and United Nations agencies in supporting the preparation of an early recovery needs assessment, the identification of recovery priorities and the drafting of an Early Recovery Framework during the early stages of the relief effort. In view of the gradual handover of the cluster approach to Government-led coordination mechanisms under ERRA, the office of the resident/humanitarian coordinator is currently being strengthened to ensure greater coherence of United Nations recovery activities and broader engagement by non-United Nations actors. Although a broad demarcation of roles and responsibilities has been agreed between the United Nations and the international lending institutions, this needs to be supported with a standing arrangement that can guide collaboration in future post-disaster situations in Pakistan and elsewhere.

Information management

34. The lack of a standardized system of data collection and information management prevented a comprehensive assessment of baseline needs, pipeline tracking, meaningful gap analysis — and ultimately, the effective delivery of assistance. Successful planning and decision-making can take place only when there is reliable and comprehensive information available to support coordination and decision-making. The deployment of a humanitarian information centre in Islamabad after the earthquake contributed to the overall response by providing a central information hub in support of international and national relief efforts. Assessment forms and gathering of data varied, however, as humanitarian actors used different templates and databases to register information in a variety of formats. Moreover, the data collected could not be easily compared with existing Government statistics. Furthermore, information management activities were limited to Islamabad and did not adequately reflect the situation in the areas most affected by the earthquake. It therefore proved difficult to use the information to gain a clear understanding of the humanitarian situation or to identify the gaps. More should be done to develop a single information product that integrates the data and information collected by individual agencies and is easily adaptable to government information systems.

Assistance and protection to vulnerable groups

35. **Assisting the return of internally displaced populations must be guided by a policy framework that is set by both government and United Nations agencies to ensure a standard response to key issues.** In Pakistan, a child protection strategy was immediately developed and implemented by the Government to avoid child trafficking. However, the strategy for the return of internally displaced persons was developed by individual field offices. A successful return of internally displaced persons requires a broader policy framework that sets clear parameters for United Nations support to the Government's return efforts, which should be predicated on the fundamental need to ensure voluntary, safe and dignified return or resettlement. Such a framework requires involving those who have been displaced in their own resettlement; comprehensive monitoring and reporting on all aspects of the return process; and proper communication channels that trickle down from the policy to the operational level and to the displaced people themselves. In the case of Pakistan, such a framework should also consider that seasonal migration is part of life for many rural communities in Pakistan and that given the uncertainty of life in the villages and the precarious seismic nature of the terrain, some migration for economic and other reasons is likely to accelerate.

Resource mobilization

36. **Slow funding continues to hamper United Nations operations, as United Nations agencies need to delay or scale down activities while waiting for contributions to materialize.** In the aftermath of the South Asia earthquake, the United Nations launched a flash appeal within three days of the disaster and embarked on a public information and media strategy to ensure adequate visibility for the appeal. Nevertheless, such improvements to the appeals process failed to translate into satisfactory funding levels: one month after the earthquake, the appeal was only 12 per cent funded. Six months after the launch of the appeal, only two thirds of the overall requirements have been met. Such funding inadequacies and

delays continue to impede the ability of the international community to respond with the capacity and pace required. For example, a lack of funding may interrupt ongoing relief/recovery helicopter operations, which would delay the delivery of supplies to areas prone to springtime flooding and landslides.

37. Such a funding crunch was not felt by all humanitarian organizations, however. The appeal launched by IFRC was 31 per cent funded at the end of October and 84 per cent funded after six months. Many contributions from donors were channelled directly to the Government of Pakistan, rather than through the appeal. The lacklustre response by donors to the United Nations appeal raises issues about the use of the flash appeal as well as donor perception of United Nations capacity to respond to disasters.

38. The modalities and scope of flash appeals are now being re-examined in light of the earthquake experience and it is hoped that donors would similarly review their capacity to quickly and adequately fund large-scale disasters. Although the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund will help to jump-start relief operations in future sudden-onset disasters, such a fund, which is only mandated to disburse $30 million per emergency, cannot replace donor efforts to wholly fund United Nations relief and recovery appeals.

39. **Early attention to transition planning may help to sustain post-disaster recovery efforts.** Lessons learned from previous, large-scale disasters suggest that waning donor attention and a lack of resource mobilization mechanisms that cover the post-disaster phase often mean that funds are not adequate to finance the enormous and critical tasks that make up the recovery effort. To pre-empt that phenomenon, the United Nations, in close cooperation with its Government counterparts, developed both an Early Recovery Framework and an Action Plan for Transition from Relief to Recovery, based on Government priorities. Together, both documents outline a strategic plan and concrete programme proposals, which should be supported in full by donors. The work of the United Nations Special Envoy should also be supported to maintain visibility of the crisis and help to convert pledges made at the reconstruction conference in November 2005 into concrete commitments towards ongoing recovery and reconstruction.

40. After a successful relief phase, the Government is now faced with several years of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Accurately reporting, tracking and analysing the sources and uses of funding for those activities will be an important task for the Government and will increase its ability to raise funds for such projects in the future. The establishment of a development assistance database that tracks aid provided to Pakistan following the earthquake and that is already under way will help to provide such transparency and accountability by helping to coordinate, manage and monitor recovery aid flows and their results, and by ensuring their alignment with national priorities. The database[4] has been tested in the countries affected by the tsunami and training will be conducted for ERRA and the provincial governments.

Disaster management and risk reduction

41. **Addressing disaster risk in a comprehensive manner is fundamental for mitigating the negative effects of disasters and should be a key component of disaster management activities, in all phases.** Prior to the earthquake, however, Pakistan lacked an established system for disaster management, which resulted in ad

hoc regulations to manage response and recovery in the aftermath of the earthquake. New structures were created with power and resource bases that either were initially not well understood or duplicated what already existed, leading to coordination problems and some degree of delay.

42. The United Nations has therefore completed a comprehensive review of the existing capacity for disaster preparedness and management in Pakistan and devised a programme for technical cooperation with the Government at all levels. The programme includes capacity-building of federal, provincial and district government and civil society groups, as well as the formulation and application of disaster response and mitigation systems in national policy. This includes the formation of a National Disaster Management Commission chaired by the prime minister and composed of other cabinet ministers.

43. The Commission and its executive body, the National Disaster Management Authority will be responsible for coordinating disaster management in its broader sense and include the integration of disaster management into sectoral development policies. Similar institutional set-ups at the provincial and district levels will provide the critical linkage essential for the creation of district, provincial and ultimately a national disaster preparedness plan. The process will also engage NGOs, other stakeholders, media, and United Nations agencies and will include work being undertaken by various other voluntary and private initiatives in disaster management at various levels.

44. The success of such initiatives depends on the broad participation of all stakeholders as well as the integration of disaster management activities into all relevant areas of government.

IV. Recommendations of the Secretary-General

Response capacity

45. **The United Nations humanitarian agencies and relevant international organizations and civil society groups should strengthen national and local capacities in support of the Government of Pakistan.** This includes a commitment by the United Nations, Governments and relevant civil society groups to review and assess the existing capacity, including standby arrangements and training programmes in-country and to support the development of dedicated civilian disaster management institutions at all levels. In addition, this requires the establishment of national contingency plans and regulatory frameworks that incorporate clear procedures for assessing needs against a set of baseline indicators of minimum requirements, developed in consultation with community leaders and local NGOs, to ensure that relief supplies reach all affected populations. Also required is a commitment by Member States having advanced disaster response, early warning and preparedness capacity to share knowledge, expertise, technology and assets with disaster-prone countries, such as Pakistan, that do not have fully developed disaster management systems.

46. **Providers of disaster relief assistance, whenever possible, should make better use of local skills, expertise and materials when responding to disasters.** This includes using the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the United Nations Volunteers system, and civil society groups to identify, in advance,

appropriately skilled staff for disaster response. This also means the identification and recording of potential local procurement of supplies and materials, as appropriate.

Civil-military coordination

47. **The Government of Pakistan, other Governments in disaster-prone countries, major providers of military assets and United Nations humanitarian agencies should commit to strengthening the understanding and implementation of principles and procedures for the use of military assets in disaster response.** This includes improving standby arrangements with major providers of military assets and the effective use and application of the Oslo Guidelines in each disaster response context as a framework for civil-military coordination in this area.

Disaster preparedness

48. Relevant providers of disaster relief assistance should assist the Government of Pakistan in strengthening disaster preparedness planning that includes actors at all levels and incorporates all types of beneficiaries. Such preparedness measures should include the development of people-centred early warning initiatives, response and recovery plans, common assistance levels and targets, standard operating procedures and the collection and dissemination of baseline data related to vulnerable populations. Preparedness planning should include national, subnational and community-based initiatives and should ensure that populations living in disaster-prone areas are adequately covered by preparedness mechanisms.

Disaster recovery

49. **Providers of recovery assistance should take concrete steps to maximize the participation of beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of recovery programmes.** This should include concrete mechanisms to enhance the level of accountability to beneficiaries to ensure that the provision of assistance is based on the needs of the affected populations.

50. **International financial institutions are encouraged to engage with United Nations agencies in the planning, funding and coordination of post-disaster recovery efforts in accordance with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.**

Disaster risk reduction

51. **Relevant United Nations organizations, in support of the Government of Pakistan, should strengthen in-country disaster risk management capacity at all levels, including at the community level.** This involves the strengthening or the establishment of institutional and legislative systems that integrate risk reduction into the planning and implementation of all national disaster management initiatives and institutions. This may also include reviewing and streamlining existing laws, rules, guiding principles and all other instruments on international humanitarian assistance for emergency response and disaster risk reduction developed by relevant agencies, organizations and intergovernmental bodies within and outside the United Nations system. Where appropriate, this may include developing international legal instruments and regulatory frameworks by which to tackle emerging global disaster threats more effectively.

Information management

52. United Nations agencies should standardize the quality and practice of information collection, dissemination and analysis and of relief tracking and establish a coherent monitoring and evaluation system capable of capturing progress and lessons from ongoing recovery efforts. The event of the South Asia earthquake offers an opportunity to achieve a consensus on the development of common standards and methodologies that support analysis, coordination and strategic decision-making. Field-level information systems may also be strengthened by the development of a common tracking tool that monitors the arrival and distribution of both food and non-food relief items and a common monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that relief and recovery programmes are effective, timely, participatory, equitable and sustainable.

Resource mobilization

53. **Relevant United Nations organizations and Member States should consider a designated resource mobilization tool for recovery.** Although existing resource mobilization mechanisms are currently being used flexibly for that purpose, some delays in securing funds for early recovery have been encountered. In other post-disaster situations, there is normally a "dip" in momentum and the United Nations system has developed, in close cooperation with Governments, transitional recovery strategies complete with costed transitional results matrices. Such costed strategies, which outline how the United Nations system can support the concerned Governments in their recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction effort, have been helpful.

Notes

[1] Department of Humanitarian Affairs publication, DHA/94/95.

[2] The International Humanitarian Partnership (IHP) is an informal network of organizations that provide assets on request to support emergency response missions of the United Nations, especially the UNDAC team. The United Kingdom Department for International Development, the Danish Emergency Management Agency and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency founded IHP in 1995. In 1998, the Norwegian Department for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning and the Finn Rescue Force of the Finnish Ministry of the Interior joined. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has joined as a non-operational member and others are actively interested, including Belgium and Estonia. A similar model of multinational cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region is being created by the formation of the Asia-Pacific Humanitarian Partnership which includes Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

[3] UNOSAT is a United Nations initiative to provide the humanitarian community with access to satellite imagery and Geographic Information System (GIS) services. UNOSAT is implemented by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). In addition, partners from public and private organizations constitute the UNOSAT consortium.

[4] Available at http://www.dadpak.org/.

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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Application of an intergovernmental organization for observer status with the Economic and Social Council

Letter dated 17 April 2006 from the Chairman of the South Centre addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

As you know, the South Centre is an intergovernmental organization of developing countries holding offices at Geneva. The South Centre was formally established in July 1995 when the 1994 Intergovernmental Agreement to Establish the South Centre, which is currently deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General, entered into force. We currently have 50 developing country member States.

According to the Intergovernmental Agreement, the South Centre has the following among its central objectives:

- To promote South solidarity, South consciousness and mutual knowledge and understanding among the countries and peoples of the South.
- To promote various types of South-South cooperation and action, South-South links, networking and information exchange.
- To contribute to South-wide collaboration in promoting common interests and coordinated participation by developing countries in international forums dealing with South-South and North-South matters, as well as with other global concerns.
- To foster convergent views and approaches among countries of the South with respect to global economic, political and strategic issues related to evolving concepts of development, sovereignty and security.
- To contribute to better mutual understanding and cooperation between the South and the North on the basis of equity and justice for all and, to this end,

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to the democratization and strengthening of the United Nations and its family of organizations.

Broadly, the Centre works to assist in developing points of view of the South on major policy issues, and to generate ideas and action-oriented proposals for consideration by the collectivity of South Governments, institutions of South-South cooperation, intergovernmental organizations of the South, and non-governmental organizations and the community at large. In order to meet its objectives, and within the limits of its capacity and mandate, the Centre also aims to respond to requests for policy advice, and for technical and other support from collective entities of the South such as the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement.

In carrying out the mandate above, the South Centre considers the United Nations to be one of its major partners, especially in the context of promoting and supporting the development objectives and aspirations of the South. In this regard, the work of the Economic and Social Council is of great relevance to the South and, therefore, of prime importance to the South Centre.

In this context, on behalf of the South Centre and its Board, I would like therefore to request that the South Centre be granted status as a permanent observer organization in the sessions and the work of the Economic and Social Council.

(*Signed*) Boutros **Boutros-Ghali**
Chairman
South Centre Board